Mr. *ATTERBURY's*
SERMON
BEFORE THE
QUEEN.

The Scorner Incapable of True Wiſdom.

E.10.7

A

SERMON

BEFORE THE

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL, *October* 28. 1694.

By *Francis Atterbury*, Student of *Chriſt-Church*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Their Majeſties.

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A

SERMON

ON

PROVERBS XIV. 6.

A Scorner ſeeketh Wiſdom, and findeth it not.

IT is the Wiſeſt among the Children of Men, who ſpeaks; and about That in which We are moſt nearly concern'd, and He was moſt immediately converſant, even the Method of attaining True Wiſdom; It becomes us therefore to give the moſt fixt and ſerious Attention, we can, to what he is ſaying:

A Scorner, ſays he, *ſeeketh Wiſdom, and findeth it not.* Where, we are firſt to enquire, Who it is, that is repreſented to us under the Character of *a Scorner*; and then in what Senſe he is ſaid to *ſeek Wiſdom*, but *not to find it.*

The *Scorner*, is One, who is frequently mention'd in this Book of *Proverbs*; and whom the Author of

it has levell'd many of his wiſe ſayings againſt. We find in the *Pſalms*, and *Prophetic* Writings alſo, many Glances at him, many Complaints of him. So that the Nation of the *Jews* did, it ſeems, abound mightily with This ſort of Men; and They were a Great and Particular Grievance to the Followers of True Piety and Wiſedom.

Their Character ſeems, in ſhort, to have been this. They were Men, that, with much adoe, had made a ſhift to get rid of Good Principles, and ſuch ſtiff Opinions as they found inconſiſtent with a Looſe Practiſe. As they had not any Religion themſelves, ſo Their Way was to deſpiſe Thoſe who had; to look down with Pitty and Contempt upon a poor deluded Under-World; Beaſts of Burthen that follow'd, in a Track, after their Leader; Slaves to receiv'd Rules, and Precarious Opinions, to Fooliſh Empty Forms and Obſervanſes; but who never once reaſon'd freely, or thought for Themſelves. They were unfortunately fallen into a Time, wherein frequent Commotions hapned in the *Jewiſh* State (as the Caſe was remarkably in the Age before *Solomon* came to the Throne) and had ſeen ſeveral Sorts of Men uppermoſt, and, conſequently, ſeveral Notions of Things prevailing by Turns. This contributed mightily to unſettle their Thoughts, or (as They call'd it doubtleſs) to *inlarge* 'em; to create in 'em a ſlight Opinion of the Eternal Differences of Right and

and Wrong, Good and Evil; and to make 'em laugh at Thoſe, who were Eager on any Side, or for any Cauſe whatſoever, which They did not get by.

They evidently ſaw that Some, who ſet up for Greater Purity, and a Demurer Shew and Face of Religion than their Neighbours, were really Counterfeits, and meant nothing, at the bottom, but Their Own Intereſt. And they wiſely reſolv'd, upon This, that All Religion was, like Theirs, a Convenient Trick and Pretence onely; invented by Cunning men to keep ſilly People in awe, to make Princes Reign ſafely, and the Prieſthood Live Eaſily. But as for Them, They knew better things, than to fall in With the Herd, and to give themſelves up to be ridden by the Tribe of *Levi*: The Pooreſt and moſt Contemptible Tribe of the Twelve, who had no Lott, no Inheritance amongſt 'em; but liv'd upon the Cheat of Sacrifices and Offerings, and upon driving a Gainful Traffick for the Good Things of This World, paid down to Them *here*, by promiſing and preaching up to Thoſe they dealt with, a Recompence in Another World *hereafter*.

Nor were Theſe men content to injoy this Secret, which They had Thus found out, quietly among themſelves; but ſet up openly for Proſelytes and a Party; for running down all Religion, and for laughing Piety and Virtue out of Countenance: ſo that a Good and Honeſt Man was ſure to be Their Mark

whereſoever they found him, and They were ever *ſhooting out Their Arrows againſt him, even Bitter Words.* And This was come to that paſs, that the True Servants of God did almoſt ſink under the Affliction; and did make it matter of Publick Requeſt to God in the Solemn Service of the Church, to be freed from it. *Have mercy upon us, O Lord,* ſaid They, *have mercy upon us, for we are exceedingly filled with Contempt. Our Soul is exceedingly filled with the Scorning of Thoſe that are at Eaſe, and with the Contempt of the Proud.*

This is, in ſome Meaſure, the Character of That man, who, in the Language of the Text, is call'd *A Scorner:* And You ſee now in what Senſe he is ſaid to *ſeek Wiſdom*, but *not to find it.* For the meaning of that is plainly this; that He pretends to know more, and to ſee further, than the reſt of mankind; to have made freer Enquiries after Truth, and to have ſhaken off the Prejudices of Education more Throughly; He ſets up for examining Things to the bottom, without taking 'em upon Truſt, or relying on the Authority of any Man. What God is pretended to have ſaid in the Holy Writings, What Wiſe and Good Men have ſaid in all Ages and Countries of the World, he is not concern'd to know. To the *Oracles of Right Reaſon he goes* (by Right Reaſon always meaning his Own) and from thence he enquires what he is to think, and to do:

raiſes

raiſes ſome Fancyful Scheme of things to himſelf, frames ſome Particular Set of Opinions; and then rejoyces in the mighty Diſcovery he has made, and wonders at the Reſt of the World, that they do not fall in with it, and adore it. Now theſe Pretences the Wiſe man tells us are vain, and theſe ſearches are vain: He has taken a great deal of pains, only to be out of the way, and to miſs the mark which he aims at. *A Scorner ſeeketh Wiſdom, and findeth it not!*

Having, thus largely, open'd the Senſe of the Text, I ſhall endeavour, in what follows, to juſtifie the Truth of the Obſervation contain'd there, by ſhewing You, how it comes to paſs, that the Men who thus ſet up for a more than ordinary pitch of Wiſdom and Senſe, by Contemning Religion, and Deriding the Profeſſors of it, do always, and muſt always fail of the End which they propoſe to themſelves; ſince whatever Abilities they may have in Other matters, yet they are the moſt unqualified and incapable of all men, to make impartial Enquiries after Divine Truth, and to diſcern between That and Error.

There are *Four* Things that particularly unfit a Man for ſuch a Task, a very *Proud*, or a very *Suſpicious* Temper, *Falſe Wit*, or *Senſuality*. And Theſe are the Chief and Prevailing Ingredients in the Compoſition of That man, whom we call a Scorner. The Two Laſt do generally, and in moſt inſtances, belong to him; but the Two Firſt are Eſſential to him and inſeparable from him.

Pride

Pride is that Ruling Quality which (of all others) has the moſt conſiderable ſhare in him; *Proud and Haughty* Scorner is his *Name*, ſays *Solomon*, elſewhere. And agen, *There is a Generation, O how lofty are their Eyes! and Their Eylids lifted up!* The truth is, there never was, nor ever can be a ſettled Contempt of Religious Principles, that is not built upon *Pride*, *i. e.* upon an undue Value which a Man has for himſelf, and for his own Opinion, and a Diſregard for every thing beſides. And therefore the Author of that Fantaſtical Book, the *Leviathan*, does at the very Entrance of it, very honeſtly, and in Terms, confeſs that he is a Man, who *Loves his own Opinions*. And ſo doubtleſs does every Man too, who treads in his Steps, thô he does not own it ſo frankly, or perhaps know it ſo throughly. Indeed a Modeſt Humble man can hardly bring himſelf once to think of ſhaking off common receiv'd Principles, and going againſt the United Wiſdom of mankind: or, if he ſhould think of it, yet will he never venture to publiſh that Thought, but will conceal it as carefully, as he would his own Boſom Infirmity, or the Secret of his Friend. 'Tis the Preſumptuous and Proud man only, that dares to trample on thoſe Truths, which the reſt of the World reverence, and can ſit down quietly in the aſſurance that He alone is in the Right, and all mankind beſide in the Wrong.

Now,

Now, I ſay, as there is no One Quality, that ſticks more cloſely to a Scorner, than That of Pride, ſo is there none that is a greater Enemy to juſt Thinking, and to an impartial Search after Truths of all kinds; eſpecially after thoſe, which relate to Religion and Piety. And no wonder therefore, if, on This Account, the Scorner, thô he *ſeek Wiſdom, yet findeth it not*. *Pride* makes a man ſeem ſufficient in his own Eyes for all manner of Speculations and Inquiries, and therefore puts him indifferently upon the purſuit of all Knowledge, and the determination of all Doubts, without giving him Leave to diſtruſt himſelf in the leaſt, or once to conſider, which way his Genius and Abilities lie. Hence it comes, that the Man, not being duly Qualified for Every Search, or, if he were, yet not having leiſure and opportunity enough to go through with it, is fain to take up with ſlight and ſuperficial accounts of things; and then, what he wants in true Knowledge, to make up in down right Aſſurance. As ſoon as he has touch'd on any Study, he immediately ſeems to himſelf to have maſter'd it; is as Poſitive in his Opinions, and as hardy in his Aſſertions, as if the Thoughts of his whole Life had been directed That way only: Which is, as if a Coaſter, who has gone from Port to Port only, ſhould pretend to give a better deſcription of the Inland Parts of a Country, than Thoſe who have travelled it all over. But this, I ſay, is the

miſchievous

miſchievous Nature of Pride; it makes a Man Graſp at every thing; and, by Conſequence, comprehend nothing effectually and throughly; and yet (which is worſt of all) incline, him to deſpiſe and contradict thoſe that do. It gives him juſt enough underſtanding to raiſe an Objection, or a Doubt, but not enough to lay it; which, as it is the meaneſt and moſt deſpicable, ſo it is alſo the moſt dangerous State of mind, a man can be in; and by ſo much the more dangerous, as the Subject he is upon is more important, and the Errors more fatal which he runs into in managing it. He that is but Half a Philoſopher is in danger of being an Atheiſt; an Half Phyſician is apt to turn Empiric; an Half Bred man is conceited in his Addreſs, and troubleſome in his Converſation. Thus it is in all matters of Speculation or Practiſe; He that knows but a little of 'em, and is very confident of his own ſtrength, is more out of the way of True Knowledge than if he knew nothing at all. Now there is, I ſay, a Natural Tendency in Pride, to put a man into this State, and therefore it muſt needs be a Quality very oppoſite to the Search and Attainment of True Wiſdom.

And then, ſuppoſing a Proud man to be once in the Wrong, it is almoſt impoſſible, that he ſhould ever be ſet Right again; He is plac'd above the reach of that great means of amendment, Reproof; *A Scorner heareth not rebuke*, ſays *Solomon*: and therefore as his

Pride

Pride led him into a miſtake at firſt, ſo will it be ſure to keep him there; and to harden him in his way, againſt whatever wiſe men can think, or ſay of him.

Thus, I ſay, is Pride an Enemy to the Knowledge of Truth in general, but moſt of all does it hinder men form diſcerning Sacred Truths, and the Doctrines of Reveal'd Religion. A Proud man is very hardly brought to digeſt the Humble Duties of the Croſs, or to receive the Myſteries of Chriſtianity: the One are too low for him, and he cannot ſtoop to the Practiſe of 'em; the other are too high for his Underſtanding, and he cannot tell how to entertain any thing as true, that he does not perfectly comprehend. If he cannot give himſelf a certain plain account in what Manner, and to what End God did a thing, he wiſely reſolves, that therefore he did it not all. If he has not as clear an Idea of every Term in an Article of Faith, as he has of Thoſe in a Mathematical Propoſition, 'tis preſently Unphiloſophical abſurd, and fooliſh; invented by Thoſe whoſe Intereſt it is, to puzzle mens underſtandings, that they may have their Wills and Affections at Their Service.

And This puts Us in mind alſo of that *Second* Great *Ingredient* in the Character of a Scorner which we propos'd to conſider, a ſtrange and *unreaſonable Suſpicion*, by which he doubts of every thing he hears, and diſtruſts every man he converſes with; Ima-

gines the World to be all Cheat and Impoſture; that there is no Sincerity, no Honeſty any where; but that every man is continually Studying how to put a Trick upon his Neighbour. Without This Temper it might be Eaſily prov'd, that a man cannot bring himſelf to run down Religion and the Profeſſors of it; and, with it, it is impoſſible, I think, to arrive at True Wiſdom. Indeed to be Cautious and upon our Guard in receiving Doctrines, and not eaſily to give up our aſſent to every Tale that is told us, is a piece of great Prudence and very requiſite in ſuch a multiplicity of Opinions as there is in the world, to preſerve us from Error: But then we may carry this point too farr; we may be ſo ſcrupulous and circumſpect in admitting the Teſtimonies of men, as to reject ſome Good Witneſſes among ſeveral Bad ones; and to deceive our Selves often times for very fear of being deceiv'd by Others. A General *undiſtinguiſhing Suſpicion* is as apt every whit to miſlead a man, as a too Eaſie and Unwary Credulity. And This is remarkably the Caſe of the Scorner. He is ſo poſſeſs'd with the Notion of *Prieſt-Craft*, and *Pious Frauds*, as to apply it indifferently to all Religions, and to Every thing in Religion. He is ſo afraid of having his Underſtanding impos'd on in Matters of Faith that he ſtands equally aloof from all Propoſitions of that kind, whether True or Falſe. Which is, as if a Man ſhould refuſe to receive any

*Mony

Mony at all, becauſe there is a great deal goes about that is Falſe and Counterfeit; or reſolve not to make a Friendſhip or Acquaintance with any man; becauſe many men are not to be truſted. Certainly this is a very great Inſtance of Folly, and in what Breaſt ſoever it is, cannot poſſibly be conſiſtent with True Prudence and Wiſdom. An extremity of Suſpicion in an Inquirer after Truth, is like a Raging Jealouſie in an Husband, or a Friend; It leads a man to turn all his thoughts toward the ill-natur'd ſide, and to put the worſt conſtruction upon every thing, and (in Conſequence of that) for once that he is really in the Right, in his Gueſſes and Cenſures, to be very often and very much in the Wrong.

A *Third* part of the Character of that Man we are diſcourſing of, is *Falſe Wit*; or a Way of expoſing Things Sacred and Serious by paſſing a Bold Jeſt upon 'em, and Ridiculing arguments inſtead of Confuting 'em. The very name of *a Scorner* will tell us, that This is One of his moſt belov'd Accompliſhments: And I am ſure it is ſuch an One, as can never conduce to his Getting right Impreſſions of Things, and can hardly ever be made conſiſtent with his Having 'em. Wit indeed, as it implies a certain uncommon Reach and Vivacity of Thought, is a very Uſeful Talent; very fit to be employ'd in the Search of Truth, and very capable of aſſiſting us to diſcern and find it: but in the Way, in which the

Scorner exerts it, the Way of Satyr and Prophane Drollery, it betrays a man into a Thouſand Errors, for One that it diſcovers to him. Men of Quick and Lively parts are apt to give themſelves a looſe beyond Plain Reaſon and Common Senſe; and to ſay many things not exactly Right and True in order to ſay ſomething New and Surprizing. Their Great Aim is, in general, *to pleaſe*; and, in order to that, they muſt bend all their Wit that way, to which the Corrupt Nature of man is inclin'd, and be ſure always to ſpeak *againſt* that which is uppermoſt. This gives 'em a Light and Trifling, inſtead of a Serious and Manly Spirit; and makes 'em think, they have anſwer'd all the Wiſeſt Reaſons that can be brought for any thing, if they have but clap'd a *Nickname* upon it, and dreſs'd up a Grave and Venerable Truth in ſo Odd a diſguiſe, as to raiſe Mirth and Laughter from it. Thus a late Perſon, Eminent for Wit and Wickedneſs, till a Death-bed made him more Serious, and gave him truer apprehenſions of Things, us'd to pleaſe himſelf mightily with that Thought, that the doing of a Miracle was onely *ſhewing of a Trick*: and when he had once repreſented the Thing to himſelf under that Light Image, he could hardly be brought to think reverently of it ever afterwards; or to allow the ſtrongeſt Arguments that could be brought for the Truth of Miracles, a due and impartial Conſideration.

And

And thus alſo the great Leader of the Libertines of This Age (whom we have already had occaſſion to mention) thought he had ſaid ſomething very prejudicial to the *Divinity* of Chriſt, when he had Tranſlated, after an Abſurd Manner, the Greek Word Λόγος (which by S. *John* is apply'd to Him) and blaſphemouſly told us, that That was as much as to ſay, in Our Tongue, the *Verb of God*: And again, he pretended to give a mighty Blow to the Doctrine of *Grace*, by ſtrictly enquiring into the meaning of thoſe Two Expreſſions, generally us'd by Divines concerning it, To wit *Infuſion*, and *Inſpiration*; and by informing us, that they ſignified, in plain *Engliſh*, *Inpowring* and *Inblowing*. I bring Theſe Inſtances, to ſhew, how far a Scorner may be led out of the Way of Truth, by a little Knack of playing upon Things and Words, which he miſcals *Wit*; and upon which he ſhall value himſelf more, and be wiſer in his own Conceipt than *Seven Men that can render a Reaſon.*

The *Fourth* and Laſt Thing, from whence we propos'd to give an account of His Deceptions, was *Senſuality*: and that This too does, for the moſt part, accompany a Contempt of Religion, I appeal to the Obſervation and Experience of every One that Hears me. Look round the World, and You ſhall ſeldom find a man Looſe in his Principles, that is not ſo in his Manners too. There may poſſibly be, now and then,

then, in an Age, an Inſtance of ſome Cold Phlegmatic man, that ſhall ſet up for overturning Religion and Morality, merely for the ſake of Contradiction, or to get himſelf a Name by it, without the deſign of Indulging his Own Appetites, in ſo doing: But This is a very Rare Caſe; generally the *Scorners* are, as S. *Peter* and S. *James* have Unanimouſly deſcrib'd 'em, in their ſeveral Epiſtles; *Men who walk after their Own Luſts.* Accordingly, we may obſerve, that This Scorning Humor has been moſt prevalent in Thoſe Ages of the World, in which the Love of Pleaſure, and the Arts of Eaſe and Luxury did moſt abound; and is commonly Incident to Men, at that Time of their Lives, when their Luſts are moſt ungovern'd, and their Blood boils hotteſt. 'Tis chiefly the Young Robuſt Sinner that indulges himſelf in it, *whilſt* he is in the midſt of his Enjoyments: for thô a Man may continue on this Temper in the Lateſt Years of his Life, yet he generally takes it up much Earlier.

Now the Senſual Man, is, of all men living, the moſt Improper for inquiries after Truth, and the leaſt at Leiſure for it. He is never Sedate and Cool, and therefore not able to fix his attention to a Point, and go through with it. He is never Diſintereſſed and Impartial; and therefore not capable of deliberating Freely. He is already under the Dominion and Power of his Luſt; and perhaps likes to be ſo, and is very unwilling to ſhake off his Chains. Now ſuch a Man, ſo qualified,

qualified, is, no doubt, a very incompetent Judge of Divine Truth, and very unfit to conſider the Pleas that are brought for it. His Search into These things is like to be with no great Evenneſs and Fairneſs; How can it? When he comes with ſtrong Wiſhes that he may find it all a miſtake. Indeed, when a Man allows himſelf in all ſorts of Impurities, and is determin'd to go on in 'em; and yet finds himſelf under the Troubleſome Reſtraint of Principles, and the Dread of Religion, that hangs continually over him, the onely way for him to purſue his Enjoyments, and yet be eaſie, is to ſet his Face directly againſt the Doctrines of Religion, that give him any check or diſturbance, and reſolve to get rid of 'em as ſoon as he can. And he may put the Thoughts, which ariſe in him upon This occaſion, together; and make a Book of 'em, if He pleaſes; and then tell us, that This is a ſober Enquiry after Truth; and a free diſcuſſion of the Point in debate: but there is nothing of that in it. He thinks of Truth juſt as a man does of his *Enemy*, with Spite and Anger, and a Deſign only of finding out whatever may blaſt and expoſe it. This is a ſtrange contumelious way of treating Divine things, and would tempt a Good man to return the affronts done to Vertue and Piety, by opening the Characters of Thoſe who do 'em; in which we ſhould always find, that Senſuality and Looſneſs of Life had a very great and particular ſhare.

But

But Some Men, who Write pretended *Hiſtories of Religion*, are beholding to the Real Religion of Others, that Their Hiſtories are not written.

Thus have I run through thoſe four ſeveral Properties which remarkably belong to the Character of a Scorner; and ſhewn You, how Each of 'em contributes to miſinform and miſlead Him in his purſuit of Wiſdom; ſo that, ſuppoſing him really and in good Earneſt to *ſeek* it, yet thus ſetting out and thus Qualified, it is not at all probable that he ſhould *find* it.

And now the Plain and Obvious Uſe we are to make of This Diſcourſe, is, to ſatisfie our ſelves from hence how it has come to paſs, that the True Religion, all along, in the ſeveral Ages of the World, have not been entertain'd, by many of the ſeemingly Wittieſt and Wiſeſt amongſt the Children of Men.

To This ſtartling Queſtion, We can now give a Short and Eaſie Anſwer, from the Obſervation of the Text; *They were Scorners.* They were either Proud and Opinionative Men, that could not endure to learn the plain humble Leſſons of Piety and Goodneſs, eſpecially from Such as They had no Eſteem of, no value for. Or their Minds were tainted with an ill-natur'd, and unreaſonable Supicion, which, from finding out Some Cheats in Religion, led 'em to pronounce All Religion a Cheat. They had a Talent perhaps at Ridiculing Honeſt Rules and Maxims, and making Sport with Things Sacred

and

and Serious; and therefore to have own'd any fix'd Scheme of Religious Principles, would have been a mighty Damp to their Imaginations, and have taken away from 'em the Subject of above half their Wit and Pleaſantneſs. Or, Laſtly, They were Men of *Senſual* and *Impure Lives*, who were reſolv'd to make their Opinions and their Pleaſures as conſiſtent as they could; and who therefore were oblig'd, in point of Intereſt, to disbelieve every thing that made againſt 'em.

This is the Short and True Account of the Matter; and will appear to be ſo, if we caſt our Eyes backward on the Story of the World, and conſider, Who they have been, that have rejected the True Religion all along from the Creation down to this Time.

In the Old World, *Noah*, Who was the onely man that preſerv'd the Worſhip of the True God in his Family, ſeems to have been an honeſt plain hearted man; *juſt and perfect in his Generation*, (as he is deſcribed in Scripture) *and walking with God.* The Reſt of the World are ſaid to have Eaten and Drunken, to have Married and been given in Marriage, *i.e.* They were men who liv'd in all the Enjoyments of Senſe, who revell'd, and took their fill of all the Good Things of this World; and, to be ſure, were very Merry, and very Bitter upon Thoſe who did not. How did they deride that Grave Preacher of Righte-

ouſneſs, and his Preciſe Family, when He and his Sons talk'd to 'em of Righteouſneſs, Temperance and Judgment! eſpecially, when he told 'em that there was Such a Flood coming, and that he was building That Ark to preſerve himſelf and his Houſehold, what a Jeſt was he to the Men of Parts and Pleaſure! How many Scornful and Gay things were ſaid upon this Occaſion, while the Work went forward, by Thoſe, who thought themſelves very wiſe, and Him very Fooliſh! But the Fountains of the great Deep were broken up, and the Windows of Heaven open'd, and then they began to change their Opinions when (alas!) it was too late to learn.

In the next great Period after the Flood, the true Religion was confin'd to the ſingle Nation of the *Jews*: and one may think it ſtrange at firſt ſight that (if it were the True Religion) it ſhould be ſo; that the wiſe and knowing part of mankind ſhould not diſcern the ſtrength of the Evidence that was brought for the Divinity of That way of Worſhip, nor receive the God of *Iſrael* for Their God; that *All Nations did not fall down before him, all Kingdoms did not do him ſervice.* But, if We conſider a little further, we ſhall be ſatisfied, that the true reaſon of Mens Incredulity throughout this long Period of time, was, a Mean and Contemtible Notion they had entertain'd, of the *Jewiſh* People, of their Rites and

and Ceremonies. The Wiſe Men of the Eaſt in the Earlieſt Ages, and the Philoſophers of the Weſt in Later Times, had too high an Opinion of themſelves, and too low an one of that Little, Narrow-ſoul'd, Superſtitious Nation, to ſubmit themſelves to be taught by 'em. The *Jews* were a Proverb and a By-word to the reſt of the World, the perpetual Subject of their Contempt and Reproach: And who would have thought (may we ſuppoſe one of thoſe Wiſe Heathens to have ſaid) that Truth ſhould have lain hid among ſuch an *Odd* ſort of People in ſuch a little Spot of the World.

And Thus, Again, when Chriſtianity firſt appear'd, it made no great Progreſs among the Diſputers of this World, among the Men of Wit and Subtlety; for this very Reaſon, *becauſe* they were Scorners. The Goſpel was to the *Jews*, to the moſt Learned and Proud Sect among the *Jews*, (the *Phariſees*) a *Stumbling-block*, and to thoſe of higheſt Repute among the *Greeks*, *fooliſhneſs*. The Great pretenders to knowledge Every Where unanimouſly contemn'd and derided it, as a poor and low Syſteme of Principles, and could never once think of humbling their minds to entertain the ſimplicity of the Goſpel.

And no wonder therefore, if, in ſome Ages after Chriſtianity, We find not much ſaid to the advantage of it, in the Writings of Thoſe Eminent *Greeks* and

Romans, who are allow'd to have been the beſt Maſters of Polite Thought and Expreſſion. Alas! *Porphyry* muſt have vail'd his great name for Philoſophy, and *Lucian* in great meaſure have forgone his Skill in Satyr; The Witty Libertines of thoſe Times muſt have parted with much of the Eſteem they had, and with moſt of their Pleaſures, if they had once admitted the Truth of Chriſtianity: and therefore they agreed in running down the Reputation of That, that they might not loſe their Own.

And as it was immediately after our Saviours coming, ſo has it been ever ſince to this very day. The Doctrines of the Croſs have never in any Age met, nor will they ever in any future Age meet with a kind and hearty reception, among Thoſe, who *ſit in the Seat of the Scorners*.

But let it not therefore deject us, That there are Many whom the World Eſteems, who yet eſteem not Us, and Our Holy and Undefiled Religion! and let us not ſuſpect our ſelves upon that Account, as being out of the way and impoſed upon, becauſe Men of greater Reach, and perhaps a more improv'd Underſtanding than We, are not of Our Mind. *Solomon*, who was certainly a Man of Underſtanding, and who was of our Mind, does, in a very few Words (which I cannot repeat too often) afford us a thorough Solution of the Caſe, *A Scorner* (ſaith he) *ſeeketh Wiſdom and findeth it not.*

From

From the Account of Former Times it appears to us, that Thus it always *has been*, and from reaſoning on the Nature of the Thing, that Thus it neceſſarily *muſt be*: and therefore let us poſſeſs our Souls in Patience and Peace; and go on in the plain Paths of Godlineſs and Honeſty, without Turning to the Right or Left, for whatever Men ſcornfully-Witty can ſay of us or to us.

Let us beg of Him, *who reſiſteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Lowly*, let us beg of him to Beſtow on us, to Preſerve and Increaſe in us, that *ſerious and humble* Frame of Spirit, which alone can qualifie us for a Right Apprehenſion of the Truths aud Myſteries of the Goſpel; and which is therefore certainly Preferable to all Other Endowments of Mind, however the World may have miſplac'd the greateſt Part of its Eſteem upon 'em.

And let us, in order to this end, frequently take to our ſelves the humble Words of the *Son of Syrach*, and ſay; *O Lord, Father and God of my Life, leave me not in Their Imagination, neither give me a proud Look; but turn away from Thy Servant an haughty Mind! Take away from me vain Hope and Concupiſcence, and retain him in Obedience that deſireth continually to ſerve thee! Let not the Greedineſs of the Belly, nor the Luſt of the Fleſh hold me, and give not Me thy Servant over to an Impudent Mind!*

And as for Thoſe, who contemn Us, and Our Narrow Principles, and who make us Their Deriſion daily, let us (in the Words of the Apoſtle) *not ceaſe to make mention of 'em in our Prayers, that the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Glory, may give unto 'em the Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation to the Acknowledgment of him! The Eyes of their Underſtanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints.*

FINIS.

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